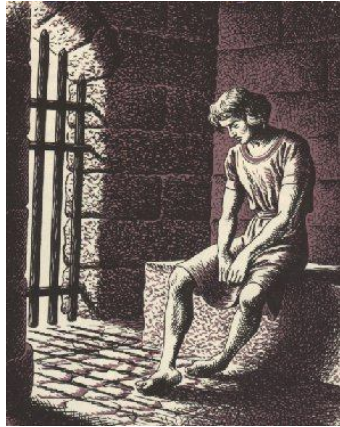


God Cannot Be Doubted

A Story by Domenic Marbaniang

The jailer pushed the youth into his prison cell with utter disgust. The youth had been convicted for attempt to rape, a serious crime, and even more serious when committed in the premises of a government official's residence. From their cells, the other prisoners gazed at the youth with astonishment and contempt. He snuggled into a corner.



There were whisperings and comments in tones and terms that would send chills down the spine. And, they continued for long and long till the heavy rug of the night dampened all sight and sound. After a while, only the guards could be heard walking with their spears tapping on the ground. The taps were being mixed with rhythmic snores buzzing through the cells. In his locked corner, the youth sobbed with hushed tears. He groaned in between snivels in a language different than that spoken in this land:

"Why is this happening to me?"

"What have I done to deserve this injustice?"

"Now, I'm hated by my family and also by the world for no wrong?"

The world was fast asleep. He was talking to God. But, was God also listening? Or, was He as indifferent as the world around? Was He also compelled by circumstances and the violent wills of men? The past was too painful. The future looked bleak, uncertain, and dark.

The youth kept weeping for a long time till it seemed all his tears had run dry. Then he stopped for a little while, and all of a sudden started

weeping the more vehemently again. This time it seemed he was singing a song:

"Forgive me Lord for doubting Your hand
That holds the scepter over sky, water, and land;
By one gesture, You have signaled it to be,
That the luminaries of heavens bow down to me.
And, yet not to me but to You who commands!
What power can resist it, what mortal hand!"

He moved his shackled hands and the chains clanked. A prisoner woke up in the opposite cell and fell to snoring again.

"Darkness has covered me like a thick cloud,
And I can't see You anywhere around;
But, should I ask for proof before I believe,
Should I have the answer before its appointed time?
Should I trust my sight and doubt Your might
By which the day exists and also the night!
Yes, also this night! Yes, also this night!"

The youth fell asleep. Unseen by him, two luminous angels who stood guard over his cell talked to each other, 'This young man knows our Master, and he knows that the Master cannot be doubted.' Just then two other angels appeared. "You are both summoned to the Master now; we'll take over. The sun is soon to rise; has the boy found some rest?" they inquired.

"Yes, he has found rest," they smilingly answered and disappeared.

Several years after this incident, the boy became the Prime Minister of that nation. The King gave him the name Zaphnath-Paaneah, which some believe means "the preserver of life"; others think that it means "the one to whom secrets are revealed." But, we remember him as Joseph, the dreamer of dreams.